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Knox, Philander C.

Speech.
Philadelphia, Pa.

Oct. 29, 1906



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SPEECH

OF

SENATOR PHILANDER C. KNOX

OF

PENNSYLVANIA

AT

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

OCTOBER 29TH, 1906

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The importance of the present campaign cannot be overstated. We shall do well to recognize plainly and frankly the undoubted fact that the peculiar situation confronting us is the result of a great revolt, the causes of which have been accumulating and strengthening throughout the United States for many years—the revolt of the people against domination by political coalitions, which align a compact force of managers in city, State and country for rule of the party—in short, revolt against “boss” tyranny. Let the justness of that revolt be granted, what then?

In the first place, I say, most heartily, where there are local and municipal abuses, let the local stables be thoroughly cleansed; let the work go on vigorously. The great body of the people of the State are not concerned, because there are struggles between Regulars and Independents here and there, except to bid God speed to all genuine movements of reform, and to sympathize with administrative reforms, with improvements in civic morals and personnel wherever they appear.

I can and do view, with a perfectly open mind, the mistakes and offenses of party management in the remote and immediate past. They are not to be

denied or minimized, and it is our duty to rid the party of such abuses ; and, where deeper shames or even crimes are charged, to investigate and punish sternly at the bar of public opinion and in the courts if the charge is made out. But it is also our duty not to exaggerate, not to assume the truth of charges, and to recognize as sensible, just, practical and honest men, all that has now been accomplished for reform and what, upon accurate analysis of the situation, our present duty is.

Last year a Republican Governor and Legislature passed various measures of great public concern, relating, among other things, to primaries, registration and the ballot, which it is universally conceded will make such political coalitions as have existed in the past impossible in the future.

Here, then, is not only the pledge of the Republican party that the movement toward reform is genuine, but here are the fruits of an awakened conscience, if you like, and of the highest motives respecting public affairs. It is the Republican party itself which proposed and accomplished these things. Let that not be forgotten.

I believe in this State, in its present as well as its past greatness, in all the possibilities and promise of future greatness. I believe in the Republican party, in the virtue of its membership,

and in its ability to meet the demands of the hour.

I protest against the current derogatory views about the Republican party and the State of Pennsylvania. I do not believe they are true. But, so far as they appear to be true, so far as there may be some truth in them, I say that Republicans are aroused, that they know their duty and can achieve it, and that the Republican party of Pennsylvania, the dominant political force in this State, will wipe out any stain which has been drawn across the fair face of that goddess of Virtue, Liberty and Independence who personifies and typifies this Commonwealth.

The Republican party has offered to the voters of this State a ticket of unexceptionable character—men of standing, experience and courage.

The candidates have given the people their solemn pledge to administer the offices faithfully, courageously and honestly, and their high characters stand as sureties for the fulfillment of their promises.

The measures for which the party stands are as sound as the ticket is unexceptionable.

The issue is the party's life and it cannot die unless it is destroyed by its own members, and it should not be destroyed now that we stand upon the threshold of better things. The Great Reformer

who drove out the money changers did not find it necessary to pull down the temple.

The party, under the reform laws it has enacted, must hereafter be controlled directly by the people, and there need be no apprehension as to the future.

There will be no further mistakes in the selection of proper candidates for office unless the people themselves make them.

Individuals can no longer dominate politics under a system providing for personal registration, primary elections and a secret ballot.

I hope to see the ballot further protected in State and Nation by a law, which, in my judgment, will go deeper than any yet enacted.

The venal voter should be disfranchised and the man who buys him should share his fate.

There can be no greater offense than making merchandise of the highest privilege and duty of citizenship.

This campaign bears immediately on the recent and present administration of National affairs and on the State representation in Congress. It has an immediate relation to the President of the United States, in whom we all believe and whom we loyally follow.

Think well upon the importance of maintaining a Republican delegation in Congress. Observe the coalitions between our opponents against Republican

Congressmen throughout the State, and ponder on the danger, I may almost say the likelihood, that without great vigilance and labor the electorate will be deceived and under the impulse of the forces of fusion, Republicans will be swept out of their seats and Democrats or so-called Independents, men whose views are unknown or strange or antagonistic to Republican policies, will enter them.

The Democratic platform contains a plank which sneeringly charges the Republican administration and President Roosevelt by name with carrying on a pretended and insincere policy in mere imitation of Mr. Bryan's views. I, for one, resent with intense indignation this flippant and baseless pronouncement. Nothing could better illustrate the cynicism, the pretense, the bad faith, and the stupidity which so often inspire Democratic counsels in Pennsylvania as elsewhere. It cannot be disguised that if the fusion ticket consisting of one Republican and three Democrats is elected it will be very largely by Democratic votes; and the Democratic party certainly will not be so blind to their opportunity and to political effect that they will not blazon to the country and throughout it for the next two years the claim that President Roosevelt and the Republican party have been condemned in Pennsylvania the stronghold of Republicanism.

The Democratic platform says :

“We congratulate the country upon the fact that the only prominence that the present Republican Administration has attained has been attained by a feeble and pretended application of the principles enunciated by Honorable William Jennings Bryan, the great Democratic Commoner, who is now regarded as the certain successor of Theodore Roosevelt to the Presidency.”

Mr. Emery said at Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, on October 17th, and I read from a stenographic report of his speech :

“I am here to-day as your candidate for Governor on a platform of right. The Lincoln platform is right and the Democratic platform is right. There is no discrepancy between the platforms, and we stand on them both.”

You may be able to explain that Mr. Emery meant, when he uttered these words, that he stood only on a part of the Democratic platform and that there really are discrepancies between the two platforms although he specifically states there are none ; but who is there to follow up this record and make the necessary explanations in the thousands of places where the Democratic platform, Mr. Emery's

speech and Republican defeat, if it so turns out, will be cited as conclusive proof of the repudiation of the President by the people of Pennsylvania.

President Roosevelt has asked for a return of the Republican members of Congress. The Lincoln party in Pennsylvania has met this request by opposing the re-election of Republican Congressmen in seven districts.

President Roosevelt has assigned as his reason for wishing the return of Republican members of Congress that he desires no interruption of his policies.

The Democratic platform of Pennsylvania declares these policies to be insincere and feeble, and the Lincoln-Democratic candidate says, no matter what he means, that he stands upon that platform.

My proposition is that however sincere the Lincoln Republicans may be in their conceit that they are standing by the President, the irresistible deduction from the facts is that they are in apparent opposition; that a fusion victory under the circumstances will be represented as a Democratic victory; and, if it is so understood, the harm will be done, notwithstanding the good intentions of individuals. I have taken pains in a recent public utterance to acquit all fusion Republicans, except those opposing the election of Republican Congress-

men, of an intention to hamper or defeat the President's policies, but there is a marked difference at times between the logic of a situation and the intentions of the actors.

My own humble relations to the work of the present National administration makes me not only naturally indignant but regretful, that any party in Pennsylvania could betray such ignorance of the broad lines upon which it has been laid out and the immense deal that has been accomplished. Its continued progress and development in its legal aspects has more recently been under the personal direction of a distinguished son of Massachusetts who honors us with his presence here to-night.

I have the honor of presenting one who has devoted his great talents for many years to the service of his country in Congress, as Secretary of the Navy, and as Attorney-General of the United States, the Honorable William H. Moody.

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